

Message Text

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14

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:WNHOWELL,,JR.:GCB

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NEA:EGABINGTON

S/S - MR. SHANKLE

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P R 292218Z OCT 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 267343

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, XF

SUBJECT: LEBANESE AMBASSADOR CALLS ON UNDER SECRETARY
HABIB

1. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR KABBANI CALLED OCTOBER 28 ON UNDER SECRETARY HABIB FOR AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS. KABBANI PRONOUNCED HIMSELF PLEASED WITH THE RIYADH AGREEMENT ON LEBANON AND SUBSEQUENT ARAB SUMMIT ENDORSEMENT. HE PARTICULARLY NOTED THE PROMINENT ROLE ASSIGNED BY THE ARAB LEAGUE TO SARKIS AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND EXPRESSED GUARDED OPTIMISM THAT A "TURNING POINT" HAD BEEN REACHED IN THE CIVIL CONFLICT.

2. THE MAJOR FOCUS OF KABBANI'S REMARKS WAS APPREHENSION
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OVER CONTINUED STRIFE IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE HAS WORRIED THAT

THE CHRISTIANS, SPECIFICALLY CHAMOUN, WERE GOING TOO FAR AND THAT ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN BLATANT AND DESTABILIZING. HABIB AGREED THAT CONTINUED CONFLICT IN SOUTH LEBANON RAISED DANGERS BUT OBSERVED THAT THE USG HAS NO RPT NO EVIDENCE OF ANY SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI PRESENCE IN LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS, HABIB POINTED OUT, HAVE EXHIBITED RESTRAINT TOWARD THE STRIFE IN LEBANON SO LONG AS THEY DID NOT BELIEVE DEVELOPMENTS INSIDE LEBANON WOULD POSE A THREAT TO THEIR OWN SECURITY. HE ADDED THAT AT PRESENT NO ONE KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN SOUTH LEBANON AND THIS FLUIDITY ADDS TO THE ANXIETY OF ALL PARTIES.

3. KABBANI EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD OVERREACTED TO MENTION IN THE RIYADH AGREEMENT OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT OF 1969 GOVERNING PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON. REFERENCE TO THE CAIRO AGREEMENT WAS, KABBANI FELT, LARGELY "RHETORIC" WHICH DID NOT RPT NOT REFLECT ARAB ACQUIESCENCE IN A RESUMPTION OF FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY ACROSS THE ISRAELI BORDER. THE FEDAYEEN, HE STATED, WOULD BE TOO WEAK TO UNDERTAKE SUCH RAIDS ANYTIME SOON WITHOUT FULL SYRIAN SUPPORT. KABBANI IS CONVINCED THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD ONLY CONTEMPLATE PROVIDING THIS SUPPORT IF THEY CONCLUDED THE CHRISTIANS WENT TOO FAR IN PROSECUTING THE CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH AND CONTINUED TO FLIRT OPENLY WITH ISRAEL.

4. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB REPLIED THAT USG VIEWS ON LEBANON WERE SET FORTH IN SOME DETAIL IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 23 AND HAVE NOT CHANGED. KABBANI REPLIED THAT HE HAD READ THE STATEMENT AND FOUND IT COMPREHENSIVE AND POSITIVE. HABIB CONTINUED THAT IT UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN LEBANON, BUT THE RIYADH AGREEMENT HAS ESTABLISHED A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK NOT ONLY FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BUT FOR THE RESTORATION OF A UNIFIED LEBANON WHICH MIGHT TURN ITS ATTENTION TO RECONSTRUCTION AND THE REINSTITUTION OF COMMUNAL BALANCE. THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS THESE OBJECTIVES AND WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF SARKIS. KABBANI SUGGESTED THAT THE USG MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE RIYADH AGREEMENT HABIB REPLIED THAT AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION FOR A RESTATE-
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MENT OF US VIEWS ON LEBANON PUBLICLY MIGHT NOT PRESENT ITSELF IMMEDIATELY BUT THAT KABBANI COULD BE CERTAIN THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR IN OUR PRIVATE CONTACTS IN LEBANON AND WITH INTERESTED MIDDLE EAST GOVERNMENTS OUR SUPPORT FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND FOR MODERATION AND RESTRAINT IN SEEKING THAT GOAL. KISSINGER

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